

News Releases

\$2.9 Million Broadband Grant Awarded to Charles County

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Charles County Government NewsRelease



For Immediate Release

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The Charles County Board of Commissioners are pleased to announce that the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development has approved Charles County's funding request for the Fiscal 2020 Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program in the amount of \$2,924,083. This grant was awarded to ThinkBig Networks, LLC. to provide rural broadband to Nanjemoy and Cobb Neck areas with a county match of \$2,598,802.

Access to broadband in rural areas is an issue throughout the nation, and Charles County is no exception. Although the more populated areas of our county have access to high-speed internet, there are many homes and businesses in the less-populated areas that do not. For this reason, the Board of Commissioners included Infrastructure/Services, which included broadband access, in their 2019-2021 Goals and Objectives.

"We are pleased to receive this grant, which allows us to expand broadband access in some of the county's rural areas. With this expansion, more Charles County residents and businesses will have access to the technology they need to stay connected to school, work, and commercial activities," said Commissioner President Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq. "I applaud the tireless efforts of the Broadband Task Force to develop and move forward a successful plan to address the county's most urgent broadband needs."

The Broadband Task Force, composed of representatives from multiple County departments, Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative, Charles County Public Schools, and community stakeholders, worked tirelessly over the last year to develop an action plan for bringing broadband access to rural areas of the county. Under the leadership of Deborah Hall, Deputy County Administrator, and Evelyn Jacobson, Chief of IT, they successfully mapped areas of the county where access was needed, presented recommendations for expanded access, and sought out grant opportunities to pay for it. The complete member list of the Rural Broadband Taskforce is located at www.CharlesCountyMD.gov/our-county/rural-broadband-in-charles-county.

The support from our partnership agencies, such as ThinkBig Networks LLC., Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative, and Charles County Public Schools, as well as the many letters of support from County residents were instrumental in receiving this grant. The continued support from, and collaboration with, our partnership agencies

will be essential to bring this project to its successful completion.

ThinkBig Networks CEO Mark Wagner said, “I am pleased that this grant allows us to use our expertise in providing a valuable service to Charles County residents and we are ready to move forward with construction.”

Construction of this project is expected to start summer of 2020 and take three years for completion.

For more information about the Maryland Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program, visit

<https://dhcd.maryland.gov/RuralBroadband>.

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